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Carter backs Turner on CIA use of reporters

Use of reporters as operatives overseas for the Central Intelligence Agency "under extreme circumstances involving national security" has the endorsement of President Carter.

Such a use of journalists is a sensitive practice so far as the media are concerned. Editors have frequently complained that the practice endangers all correspondents abroad and casts suspicions on them.

The President's views were expressed after CIA Director Stansfield Turner told the convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors that, in the past three years, the CIA has approached three American correspondents, all of whom agreed to cooperate. The recruiting was done with Turner's specific approval, something Turner said was prerequisite.

Asked about this, President Carter said:

"In a rapidly changing international situation where, on occasion, our nation's own security or existence might be threatened, we do not want to publicly foreclose the option of taking certain action that might be necessary. I think Admr. Turner expressed the policy accurately. We are not now using any newspeople. This would be done only under extreme circumstances and the personal approval of either Admr. Turner or myself would be required."